

Message Text

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SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON NEW GOC MINISTER OF LABOR, COMPTROLLER
GENERAL

REF: 77 SANTIAGO 9881

1. FORMER UNDERSECRETARY OF LABOR VASCO COSTA RAMIREZ WAS SWORN IN AS THE NEW MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL SECURITY JANUARY 3, REPLACING SERGIO FERNANDEZ FERNANDEZ WHO ASSUMED NEW DUTIES AS COMPTROLLER GENERAL JANUARY 1. BOTH OFFICIALS CARRIED THE GOC BANNER IN DEFENDING THE GOVERNMENT'S ANTI-STRIKE POSITION, ARGUING THAT BASIC TRADE UNION RIGHTS SUCH AS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING, CANNOT RETURN TO CHILE UNTIL "APOLITICAL" (READ: GOC SUPPORTIVE) TRADE UNION LEADERS ARE TRAINED.

2. BIOGRAPHIC DATA ON VASCO COSTA: BORN IN CHILLAN ON JULY 24, 1938. COSTA RECEIVED A LAW DEGREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE IN 1960, WHERE HE LATER TAUGHT CIVIL LAW. COSTA MAINTAINS HIS PRIVATE LEGAL PRACTICE IN ADDITION TO HIS OFFICIAL DUTIES. HIGHLY INTELLIGENT, COSTA BLUEPRINTED THE GOC'S POLICY OF KEEPING THE TRADE UNIONS NEUTRALIZED UNTIL YOUNGER LEADERS CAN BE TRAINED TO OCCUPY TOP POSITIONS. COSTA IS PRGAMATIC, ESSENTIALLY A TECHNOCRAT, AND A TEAM PLAYER. COSTA MARRIED THE FORMER STELLA GALVEZ FIGARIA; THEY HAVE THREE CHILDREN.

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3. FERNANDEZ REPLACED HECTOR HUMERES, WHO RETIRED EFFECTIVE DECEMBER 31 AFTER REPORTEDLY DISAGREEING WITH NEW GOC MEASURES TO RESTRICT THE COMPTROLLER'S BUDGET AND AUTONOMY (REF) WELL BEFORE AND UNCONNECTED WITH RECENT "CONSULTA." BIOGRAPHIC DATA FOLLOWS: 38 YEARS OLD, BORN IN PUNTA ARENAS. HE RECEIVED A LAW DECREE FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CHILE IN 1963 AND STILL TEACHES CIVIL LAW THERE PART-TIME. FERNANDEZ HAS TRAVELLED TO THE US ON

OFFICIAL VISITS IN 1970 AND IN NOVEMBER, 1976. HE WAS NAMED LABOR MINISTER ON MARCH 8, 1976. FERNANDEZ IS MARRIED TO THE FORMER MARIA EUGENIA DIAZ AND HAS FOUR CHILDREN. FERNANDEZ HAS PROMOTED A NEW LABOR CODE, WHICH CONTINUES UNDER STUDY. A "MERCURIO" ARTICLE DECEMBER 29 DESCRIBED HIM AS CONTROLLED, COOL-HEADED AND AN EXPERT IN SOVLING CRISES. HE IS SAID TO RARELY SMILE; IS A CHAIN SMOKER; AND ANSWERS QUESTIONS WITH SHORT, NERVOUS, BUT SURE PHRASES. IN A SPECIAL CABINET CEREMONY JANUARY 3, PRESIDENT PINOCHET EXTOLLED FERNANDEZ' PAST PERFORMANCE AND EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THAT HIS "NEWLY WON FRIEND" WOULD DO EQUALLY WELL, THOUGH "INDEPENDENTLY," IN HIS NEW POST. (COMMENT: AS COMPTROLLER GENERAL FERNANDEZ BECAME PINOCHET'S NEW ALLY WHEN HE APPROVED THE MODIFIED GOC DECREE AUTHORIZING THE NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON THE EVE OF THE JANUARY 4 VOTE. THERE IS A VERY REAL QUESTION AS TO HOW "INDEPENDELTLY" FENANDEZ WILL CARRY OUT THE DUTIES OF COMPTROLLER GENERAL, AN AUTONOMOUS POSITION TRADITIONALLY REGARDED AS THE FOURTH BRANCH OF GOVERNMENT. (WE WILL BE REPORTING FURTHER ON THIS.)

4. IN A RECENT MEETING WITH THE AMBASSADOR, FERNANDEZ SPOKE ADMIRINGLY AND AT GREAT LENGTH OF HIS STAY IN THE US WHERE HE STUDIED (COLUMBIA). HE SAID THAT THE US LABOR MOVEMENT IS THE ONLY ONE IN THE WORLD TRULY INTERESTED SOLELY IN IMPROVING THE WORKERS' CONDITIONS AND HE HOPED TO SET UP A SIMILAR SYSTEM IN CHILE.

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